



August 15, 2007

Bi-weekly Newsletter

>> **USAID Provides Assistance to Help Fight Wildfires in Bulgaria**

The U.S. Government, through USAID, is providing \$50,000 for the purchase of fire fighting equipment to assist the Government of Bulgaria in battling wildfires.

U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Alexander Karagiannis declared a disaster in Bulgaria on August 1 due to the impact of wildfires in the country. Extremely high temperatures, heavy winds and ongoing dry conditions contributed to the fires and caused the blazes to spread. Since July 20, nearly 2,000 wildfires were reported across the country, and more than 568,000 acres of woodlands, parks and farmlands were destroyed. According to the Bulgarian Agency for Civil Protection, the fires killed one person and injured nine.

>> **Bulgarian Deposit Insurance Fund Receives International Recognition**

The Bulgarian Deposit Insurance Fund (BDIF), a USAID partner and beneficiary of the USAID Financial Sector Integrity Project, was nominated for the Deposit Insurance Organization of the Year by the International Association of Deposit Insurers (IADI).

BDIF was a founding member of the International Association in 2002, and has established a strong reputation both domestically and internationally. The award recognizes institutions which contribute to the financial stability of their country and are active participants in international cooperative efforts. The U.S. FDIC as well as the deposit insurance institutions of Jordan, Brazil and Turkey are also nominees. The nomination letter highlighted BDIF's international contributions, including its leadership of the IADI Balkans Committee.

>> **USAID-Assisted Information Center Helps the Public and the Court**

The Bourgas Regional Court opened its new courthouse Information Center with a ceremony attended by judges, court staff, media, and members of the public. Located in the central hallway on the first floor, the Information Center will be staffed by a court clerk and will provide blank forms for requests for court services, brochures, and computer access to case files. The new center has four computer terminals available to the public and attorneys for read-only viewing of both District Court and Regional Court case files.

The opening ceremony included comments from Boriana Dimitrova, Bourgas Regional Court Chair, Ken Stuart, Chief of Party of the USAID Judicial Strengthening Initiative, and Georgi Kouzmanov, Bourgas Regional Prosecutor. Judge Dimitrova stressed how the Information Center will help clerks do their jobs better and will redirect the flow of people in the building. Mr. Kouzmanov congratulated the Bourgas Regional Court and expressed his wish that the prosecutor's office also has the benefit of an information center.



Bourgas Regional Court Administrator Dimka Panayotova, USAID Judicial Strengthening Initiative Legal Advisor Mimi Yotova, and Bourgas Regional Court Administrative Secretary Shtiliana Apostolova.

Information Centers increase transparency of court operations, serve the public, and help to fight corruption. The Bourgas Information Center is the last step in the wide-ranging JSI efforts to ensure the ability of the USAID Courts in Partnership to provide members of the public with the information they may need. Through the Judicial Strengthening Initiative and the JSI grants program, USAID has funded the creation of Information Centers that serve 24 courts in Bulgaria. The Bourgas center was a shared



project, with the court bearing the costs for design, IT, and staffing, and USAID paying for construction. The Bourgas courts are also looking to transform the Information Center into a combined registry, ensuring one-stop service for the public.❖

>> PC3 Telecenter Association Continues to Emerge as a Leader in IT Support for People with Disabilities

Two Telecenters in the network of the PC3 Telecenter Association conducted recent one-day seminars entitled "IT Solutions for People with Disabilities."

At both seminars, first at the Telecenter in Pravets on July 6 and then at the Telecenter in Tryavna on August 3, approximately 30 people from several towns learned about tools and resources that can facilitate access to information technology for people with disabilities. The seminar focused on remote control computer use, software and hardware tools, controls built into standard software products that assist the hearing impaired or visually impaired, and useful internet resources. Most of the participants were representatives of organizations and clubs that support people with disabilities.



Learning about IT access for people with disabilities in Tryavna.

The seminars were funded by the USAID Participant Training Project (PTP) in some of its final efforts before closing at the end of August and handing the reins to its legacy organization, the Bulgarian Center for Development and Training.

The network of Telecenters was established with the support of USAID in a project that finished in 2003. PTP has supported the telecenters with several training events over the years, including a workshop in 2003 about IT access and outreach for disadvantaged groups. These two seminars mark the PC3 Telecenter Association as a clear leader in Bulgaria regarding IT service provision and education for disabled people. ❖

>> USAID Legacy Organization Completes Second English Teacher Certification Course

The Bulgarian Center for Development and Training (BCDT), the legacy of the USAID Participant Training Program, recently completed its second intensive English teacher training course with financial assistance from USAID. Following up on an earlier course that prepared 14 novice Bulgarian teachers for work with municipal personnel in various towns around the Bulgaria, this course led to internationally recognized certification for 3 Bulgarians and 3 Americans, some of whom will use their teaching skills in Bulgaria, others abroad. As with the previous course, this one required 6 hours of practice teaching, for which practice students were recruited primarily from Bulgarian government agencies and NGOs.



Aspiring English teachers discuss a training exercise.

The teacher preparation courses (the first called Qualification in Language Teaching, or QuiLT; the second Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages, or TESOL) are licensed products of the School for International Training. BCDT is working towards full licensure to offer the courses in Bulgaria, and plans to offer the course to address local development needs in Bulgarian communities as well as to provide a source of income.❖